THE

ATTIC NIGHTS

OF

AULUS GELLIUS:

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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M DCC XCV.

THE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

MORE pleaſing works[1] than the preſent may certainly be found; but my object in writing this, was to provide my children[2] as well as myſelf with that kind of amuſement, in which they might properly relax and indulge themſelves, at the intervals from more important buſineſs. I have preſerved the ſame accidental arrangement which I had before uſed in making the collection. Whatever book came into my hand, whether it was Greek or Latin, or whatever I heard that was either worthy of being recorded or agreeable to my fancy, I wrote down without diſtinction, and without order. Theſe things I treaſured up to aid my memory, as it were by a ſtorehouſe of learning: ſo that when I wanted to refer to any particular circumſtance or word which I had at the moment forgotten, and the books from which they were taken happened not to be at hand, I could eaſily find and apply it. Thus the ſame irregularity will appear in theſe Commentaries, as exiſted in the original annotations, which were

conciſely written down without any method or arrangement in the courſe of what I at different times had heard or read. As theſe obſervations at firſt conſtituted my buſineſs, and my amuſement, through many long winter nights, which I ſpent in Attica, I have given them the name of Attic Nights, by no means imitating the fine titles [3] with which various books of a ſimilar kind have been inſcribed, by writers in both languages. Theſe authors having got together a various, mixed, and as it were immethodical kind of learning, have for this reaſon ſtudied to give their books refined and dainty titles. Some of them we find called "The Muſes," others "Silvæ:" one man calls his book "Minerva's Robe [4]," another, "The Horn of Amalthea [5]." One is termed "Honey-combs," another "Paſtures [6]," another "My own Readings," another "Ancient Readings," another "Flowrets," another "Inventions." This man names his work "Lights," that "Tapeſtries [7]," others are called "Pandects [8]," "Helicon," "Problems," "Manuals [9]," "Small Arms;" ſome alſo are ſtiled "Memorials," "Practical Hints," "Leiſure Amuſements," and "Leſſons." We meet alſo with "Natural Hiſtory," "Various Hiſtory," "The Parterre," "The Orchard," and "Common Places;" many have called their books, "Miſcellanies;"

nay, ſome have been ſtiled "Moral Epiſtles," others "Epiſtolary or Mixed Queſtions," with various other appellations, which to me appear too quaint, and to ſmell of affected refinement. For my own part, and ſuitably to my own capacity, without care or ſtudy, and as ſome may think rudely enough, I have called my book *Attic Nights*, from the place where it was written, and from the circumſtance of its being in the winter; thus yielding the palm to others in the dignity of my title, as the work itſelf is obviouſly inferior with reſpect to the labour and embelliſhment of ſtile. But in making theſe collections and remarks, I had not even the ſame purpoſe in view with the majority of thoſe to whom I allude; for all theſe, and the Greeks in particular, reading perpetually a vaſt multitude of things, have heaped together, whatever they met with, without any diſcrimination[10], as if the quantity were their only object; in peruſing which the mind will be fatigued and exhauſted, before it meets here and there with any thing amuſing to read, ornamental to know, or uſeful to remember. As to myſelf, being very partial to the ſaying of Heraclitus[11] the Epheſian, a man of the higheſt eminence, namely, that various but confuſed knowledge does not lead to wiſdom[12], I have moſt aſſiduouſly employed, and even wearied myſelf in all thoſe intervals I could ſteal from buſineſs, in turning over and curſorily reading a great num-

ber of books. But I have ſelected from them not many things, and indeed ſuch only as might lead lively and ingenious minds, by a ſhort and ſimple proceſs, to the deſire of liberal ſcience, and the ſtudy of uſeful arts, or which might reſcue men buſied with other occupations, from a mean and diſgraceful ignorance of things as well as words. The few things, therefore, which may occur in this volume, curious or perplexing, on the ſubjects of grammar, rhetoric, or even of geometry, or the ſtill fewer and more abſtruſe on the rights of augurs and the prieſthood, let them not be paſſed over as either unimportant to be known, or hard to be underſtood. I have not explored, nor diſcuſſed elaborately the intricacies of theſe queſtions. I have rather given the firſt fruits [13], and a taſte as it were of thoſe liberal arts, the total ignorance of which indicates a ſhameful neglect, and would be unpardonable in a man of the moſt moderate and ordinary education [14].—Of thoſe, therefore, if any ſuch there be, who at their leiſure may have ſome amuſement in peruſing theſe lucubrations, I would intreat, that if they ſhall find what they long ſince knew, they would not deſpiſe it as being trite and very common; for what is there in literature ſo abſtruſe, but that many men know it? It is recommendation enough, that theſe have been neither prated over again and again in ſchools, nor thumbed in commentaries. Should they meet, perchance, with any

thing that is new and original, I think it juſt that they ſhould weigh without any ſpirit of cavil, whether theſe very few ſlight leſſons are contemptible as to their power of exciting literary application, or languid in affording ingenuous amuſement, or whether they are not rather of that nature and deſcription by which the natural talents may be improved and ſtrengthened, the memory become more prompt[15], the faculty of reaſon more acute, the ſpeech more correct, in hours of relaxation more delightful, and in exerciſe more liberal. As for thoſe parts which may ſeem not ſufficiently perſpicuous, or too incomplete and ſcanty, I beg to have them conſidered as written not ſo much to inſtruct as to ſuggeſt; and that my readers would be contented with them as pointing out the paths in which they are to go, which afterwards, if they think proper, they may purſue farther by the aid of either books or tutors: as to whatever they may think reprehenſible, let their reſentment, if they pleaſe to indulge any, be directed againſt thoſe by whom it was originally written. If they ſhall find the ſame thing expreſſed differently elſewhere, let them not be too haſtily diſpleaſed; I would have them firſt refer to the contents of thoſe books, and the authorities of thoſe writers, which they from whom I differ, as well as myſelf, muſt have examined; but it will be far better for ſuch as have neither enjoyed

pleaſure nor beſtowed pains in reading, writing, and making remarks, who have not employed their waking hours as I have, who have never poliſhed their minds by examining and extracting the rival efforts of votaries of the ſame muſe, but who are immerſed in ſcenes of riot, or the cares of buſineſs, to go their way from theſe *Nights*, and ſeek out for themſelves other amuſements. It is an old proverb, "A jay[16] has no concern with muſic, nor a hog with perfumes;" but that the ill-humour and invidiouſneſs of certain ill taught people may be ſtill more exaſperated, I ſhall borrow a few verſes from a chorus of Ariſtophanes; and what he, a man of moſt exquiſite humour, propoſed as a law to the ſpectators of his play, I alſo recommend to the readers of this volume, that the vulgar and unhallowed herd, who are averſe to the ſports of the muſes, may not touch, nor even approach it.—The verſes are theſe:

Silent be they[17], and far from hence remove,
By ſcenes like ours not likely to improve,
Who never paid the honour'd muſe her rights,
Who ſenſeleſs live in wild impure delights;
I bid them once, I bid them twice begone,
I bid them thrice, in ſtill a louder tone:
Far hence depart, whilſt ye with dance and ſong
Our ſolemn feaſt, our tuneful nights prolong.

At

At preſent there are twenty books of theſe remarks. Whatever portion of future life the gods may give me to enjoy, that I can ſpare from the care of my domeſtic concerns, and the education of my children, it ſhall be wholly employed in making a ſimilar collection, at hours ſtolen from weightier buſineſs, and dedicated to ſubjects of ſecondary concern. The number of my books, therefore, with the favour of heaven, ſhall correſpond with the extent of my life, whatever this may be; nor do I deſire to live any longer than I may be able to retain this faculty of writing and making obſervation.—To each chapter I have prefixed an account of its particular contents, that it may immediately appear what may be ſought, and found in every book.

NOTES ON THE PREFACE.

THE whole of this Preface in the earlier editions which appeared of our author, was ſubjoined to the laſt chapter of the laſt book. It ſeems wonderful how it ſhould get there, having no manner of connection with the ſubject of that chapter. Later editions reſtored it to the place for which it was obviouſly intended, for no preface can be adduced, which more ſenſibly or in more elegant terms informs the reader of what the author had in view.

[1] *More pleaſing works*, &c.]—I have in a former work remarked, that it was an elegant diſtinction of the earlier writers to enter at once with a manly abruptneſs on their ſubject, without miſemploying their reader's time or their own, by elaborate and uſeleſs apologies, yet in their dialogues ſuch apologies were often interwoven.

[2] *My children.*]—Thus Cicero avowedly wrote his Book of Offices for the uſe of his ſon.

[3] *Fine titles.*]—In the infancy of letters in this country, a propenſity prevailed for giving the moſt whimſical and unaccountable titles to books: we accordingly meet with "Hunger's Prevention," "Omnibus et Singulis, or Matter for all Men," "The Will of Wit, Wit's Will, or Will's Wit, chuſe you whether," "The Dialogues of the Creatures," "A Springe to catch Woodcocks," "Your ſervant Gentlemen," with innumerable others. On this ſubject alſo

of

of the titles of books, the reader may conſult the Prolegomena of Salmaſius in Solinum. That learned man ridicules Gellius for having fallen into the ſame error for which he cenſures others. The appellation of Noctes Atticæ being, in the eſtimation of Salmaſius, no leſs faſtidious and affected than thoſe which are enumerated in the Preface.

[4] *Minerva's robe.*]—The original is πεπλον, which in its appropriate ſenſe means an embroidered veſt ſacred to Minerva; this was its primitive ſenſe, but afterwards it was uſed to ſignify, generally, a matron's robe. In its firſt meaning it was ſpecifically applied to a veſt which was carried about at Athens with great ſolemnity at the feaſt of the Panathenæa; it had embroidered on it the figure of the giant Enceladus, who was ſlain by Minerva, and was worked, not by any female hands indiſcriminately, but by virgins, who were called Εργαστινας; there were alſo woven in this robe the names of exalted and illuſtrious characters, ſuch being termed αξιοι πεπλω. See the Equites of Ariſtophanes, line 560:

Ευλογησαι βουλομεσθα τους πατερας ημων, οτι
Ανδρες ησαν της δε της γης αξιοι και τω πεπλω.

In the former of which lines, a remarkable reſemblance appears to the firſt verſe of the 44th chapter of Eccleſiaſticus:

Let us now praiſe famous men, and our fathers that begot us.

If the peplus received any contamination from dirt, or any thing elſe, it was the office of particular perſons to cleanſe it. There was alſo a peplus at Elea, ſacred to Juno. In the Iliad, when the Trojan matrons go in ſolemn proceſſion to the temple of Minerva, to implore that goddeſs to remove Diomed from the field of battle, the offering imagined to be moſt acceptable to her is a ſuperb veſt:

Go, a ſpotleſs train,
And burn rich odours in Minerva's fane;

The

The largeſt mantle your full wardrobes hold,
Moſt prized for art, and labour'd o'er with gold,
Beforé the goddeſs honoured knees be ſpread, &c.

Where the word uſed is πεπλον, upon which lines of Pope I would remark, that the ſtrong epithet of αγιλαης, applied to Minerva, is unnoticed; that "a ſpotleſs train" is expletive, and not in the original; and that Homer's deſcription of the peplus to be uſed for this purpoſe is, literally, the moſt elegant, the largeſt, and that which you yourſelf value the moſt. The carrying of this robe in ſolemn proceſſion is alſo mentioned by Virgil:

Interea ad templum non æquæ Palladis ibant
Crinibus Iliades paſſis, peplumque ferebant,
Suppliciter triſtes.

Cicero, in his Epiſtles to Atticus, b. 16. c. 11. mentions a book written by Varro, and called Pepliographia, the ſubject of which is the praiſe of illuſtrious characters. Ariſtotle alſo wrote a book, to which he gave the name of Peplum, and which contained the epitaphs of heroes: a fragment of this book is preſerved by Canter. In this alſo, as Canter affirms, were the genealogies of Homer's heroes. Conſult the Ciceronian Index of Erneſtus.

[5] *The horn of Amalthea.*]—The ſtory of this horn is variouſly related. Jupiter was ſaid to have been brought up by ſome nymphs, and fed with goat's milk, and that in gratitude he tranſlated the goat amongſt the conſtellations, and gave one of the horns to his nurſe, which was endued with the ſingular virtue of producing to the nymph whatever ſhe deſired to extract from it. According to Eraſmus, it was a title commonly given to books, the contents of which were of a miſcellaneous nature. From this the word cornucopia is derived, which in every modern nation and language has been applied as emblematic of abundance.

[6] *Paſtures.*]—Such collections were called Anthologies, and

and ſometimes στιφανον. See Carmen Meleagri, p. 55. of the Notitia Poetar. Antholog. ſubjoined to the Oxford edition of Cephalus. Anth. Gr.

[7] *Tapeſtries.*]—The Greek word is Στρωματεις; this alſo means books of miſcellanies.—Thus Clemens Alexandrinus confeſſes that he gave the name of Στρωματεις to his books from their various matter. Our author ſeems particularly to allude to the Στρωματεις of Plutarch, cited by Euſebius in his Preparatio Evangelica, book i.—*Thyſius.*

Origen alſo wrote a book, which from its miſcellaneous matter he called Στρωματεις; a metaphor, ſays Eraſmus, taken from painted hangings and tapeſtry, of which formerly the rich and great were extravagantly fond. The paraſite, in the Pſeudolus of Plautus, threatens his ſlaves, that he will ſo lace their jackets, that Campanian tapeſtry ſhall not be half ſo variegated. See Eraſmus, where he explains the term Periſtromata Campanica.

[8] *Pandects.*]—This literally means a compilation, being derived from παν all, and δεχομαι to receive. It has ſince alſo been not unfrequently uſed as a title to books, but is more particularly applied to the Digeſt or Code of Juſtinian.

[9] *Manuals.*]—In its firſt ſenſe Εγχειριδια means daggers, weapons convenient for the hand. This is the title of a book which we have of Epictetus. Eraſmus alſo wrote a book which was termed Enchiridium Militis Chriſtiani. Manual, till within theſe few years, was an appellation frequently given to books in this country, but principally confined to thoſe on the ſubjects of devotion. It is now conſidered as quaint, and is becoming obſolete.

[10] *Without any diſcrimination.*]—The original contains a proverbial expreſſion, which it would be difficult to convey in a tranſlation. "In quas res cunque inciderant, alba ut dicitur linea, ſine cura diſcriminis ſolam copiam ſectati converrebant." "Whatever they met with a white line, as it is ſaid, and without taking the pains to diſcriminate, they heaped

heaped together, as if aiming at quantity only." The line anciently uſed by architects was a white line, which, previous to its being applied, was rubbed over with red chalk: thus, ſay the commentators, the expreſſion of alba linea was applied to a perſon who approved of every thing indiſcriminately. The correſpondent term in Greek, of λευκη σταθμη, was uſed with the ſame ſignification by Plato and by Plutarch. It alſo occurs in a fragment of Sophocles, preſerved in Suidas:

Τοις μεν λογοις τοις σοισιν ὰ τεκμαιρομαι
Ου μαλλον η λευκῳ λιθῳ λευκη σταθμη.

I can no more gueſs what you mean than if a white line were applied to a white ſtone.

Eraſmus in his Adagia does not omit to make mention of this proverb; and the reader will find the Greek expreſſion of λευκη σταθμη explained in Zenobius.

[11] *Heraclitus.*]—The hiſtory of this philoſopher is given by Diogenes Laertius, and may alſo be found in Moreri. The more obvious circumſtances of his life and manners, as contraſted with thoſe of Democritus the Cynic, are ſufficiently known.

[12] *Lead to knowledge.*]—The ſenſe of the Greek proverb, ſays Gronovius, is, that confuſed and ill digeſted knowledge oppreſſes the mind, and does not promote wiſdom. A ſimilar ſentiment occurs in Seneca; non refert quam multi ſed quam boni legantur libri. And the Cynic, in the 13th book of Athenæus, expreſſes himſelf to the ſame effect:

Πολυμαθημοσυνης της, ὰ κενεωτερον αλλο.

Nothing can be emptier than exceſs of knowledge. *Gronov.*

Gronovius has omitted to inform the reader that the above Greek verſe, quoted by the Cynic in Athenæus, is given to Hipponax. See alſo the firſt chapter of Eccleſiaſtes, the laſt verſe. "For in much wiſdom is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow."

Firſt

[13] *First fruits, a taste.*]—Terms taken from the ceremonies of sacrifice. Libamentum alludes to the custom of sprinkling wine on the ground after the offering up of the victim, which was called the libation; but the priest first of all tasted it.

[14] *Moderately.*]—This is certainly not expressed with the full force of the original, which is *civiliter*, and which implies such an education, as every Roman citizen may be expected to receive.

[15] *The memory.*]—See this passage in a manner transcribed by Macrobius, in the first chapter of the first book of the Saturnalia. Invenies plurima quæ sit aut voluptati legere, aut cultui legisse, aut usui meminisse, nihil enim huic operi insertum puto, aut cognitu inutile, aut difficile perceptu, sed omnia quibus sit ingenium tuum vegetius, memoria adminiculatior, oratio sollertior, sermo incorruptior.

Concerning which passage it may be observed, that the first editions of Aulus Gellius retained the reading of *oratio sollertior*, which, considering the context, has no meaning at all.

[16] *A jay.*]—A dunce has no concern with the muses, no more have jays, the most garrulous of birds, with musical instruments. Concerning the Amaracus, the following words of Servius seem pertinent in this place. Amaracus was the name of a youth who was perfume bearer to some prince; he happened to fall while carrying some unguents, and the mixture of them made the odour still more exquisite; from hence the most delicious perfumes were called amaracina. He was changed into the herb sweet marjoram, which, henceforth bore this name. Virgil mentions the herb, Æn. i. 693.—

Ubi mollis amaracus illum
Floribus et dulci adspirans complectitur umbra.

See also Pliny. Nat. Hist. xxi. 11.

The

The averſion of hogs to the amaracus is thus mentioned by Lucretius:

Denique amaracinum fugitat ſus, et timet omne
Unguentum, nam ſetigeris ſubus acre venenum eſt. *Thyſius.*

This proverb is mentioned by Eraſmus, and well explained. The jay, ſays he, is the noiſieſt of birds, and aſſociates only with its kind, thus a more intolerable noiſe is excited, whereas muſic requires ſtill and ſilent attention. With reſpect to the latter part of the expreſſion, the ſcriptural phraſe of caſting pearls before ſwine is of ſimilar import, and conveyed in terms by no means leſs energetic. The Greeks had a proverb not very unlike this in its application: Υς διὰ ῥοδων (ſus per roſas) a hog amongſt roſes, applied to ſtupid people, upon whom good inſtruction was thrown away.

[17] *Silent be they*, &c.]—Theſe verſes occur in the Ranæ of Ariſtophanes, act i. ſcene 7.—After the three firſt many others are inſerted in the original, deſcribing particularly a number of mean, ignorant, or profligate characters, whom in like manner the poet wiſhes to abſent themſelves from the repreſentation of his play; the paſſage then concludes as it is here quoted by Gellius.